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Telling Bible Stories. By LOUISE SEYMOUR HOUGHTON. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905. Pp. ix+250. \$1.25.

The Story Bible. By MARGARET E. SANGSTER. New York: Mof-fat, Yard & Co., 1905. Pp. 219.

The growing interest in effective ways of telling Bible stories to children is evidenced by the increasing number of books which are being written on the subject. Two recent books of this character are by women well known to the public. One, entitled *Telling Bible Stories*, by Mrs. Louise Seymour Houghton, is for adult readers; the other, *The Story Bible*, by Mrs. Margaret E. Sangster, is intended for children.

Mrs. Houghton in her first chapter presents an able thesis on "The Old Testament and the Child." She shows how the Old Testament is filled with stories of heroes whose lives are continually influenced by a consciousness of the presence of God. This practicing of God's presence, she affirms, is the natural and ideal attitude of the child-nature. Further, the Old Testament presents a child-people in their relation to God. Inasmuch as Mrs. Houghton, in common with many others, accepts the theory that "the mental development of every child naturally repeats the mental history of the race," she concludes that "the Old Testament is pre-eminently the child's book," its unique value being found in the fact that it tells the story of elemental man "with his face toward God."

This chapter is followed by a series of studies of typical Old Testament stories, which she divides into five classes: the morning stories or folk-tales of the Hebrews; the patriarch stories; the hero stories; the romance stories; and finally the purpose stories. With but one exception, Mrs. Houghton does not attempt to tell the stories herself for the children's reading. Instead, she has aimed to inspire mothers to tell the Old Testament stories to their children by suggesting to them what in the stories has meaning and interest for children. The author presents with keen insight what she believes to be the central themes of the stories, suggesting their geographical or historical atmospheres, and indicating varying points of view from which they may be treated for children of different ages.

The woman already somewhat intelligent in the biblical field, and sufficiently open-minded to adapt herself to modern ways of dealing with biblical material, will find the book most suggestive. Mrs. Houghton's diction may prove a little too philosophic for the average mother. Moreover she has presupposed for the reader a wide knowledge of biblical literature and access through libraries to a still wider range of literature. To follow her suggestions thoroughly would probably require more time

for study than most busy mothers are able to command or have the inclination to give. Mrs. Houghton's book, however, is a valuable contribution to the literature on the religious education of children, and, it is to be hoped, will be carefully studied by leaders in Sunday-school work, and especially those who are planning graded curricula, although there may be difference of opinion as to many of her conclusions.

Mrs. Sangster, in her *Story Bible*, has included sixty-two chapters or stories, forty-eight of which are from the Old Testament and fourteen from the New. The book is tastefully bound, printed in large, clear type, and illustrated by twelve colored drawings. Like all of Mrs. Sangster's writings, this book for children is pervaded with the beautiful and gentle spirit of her personality.

To the more modern students of the Bible the book may seem inadequate. The author has revealed no unusual insight in finding the central themes of the stories told. In not a few instances she names more than one "lesson" to be drawn from a story, apparently regarding them of equal importance. In her choice of biblical material she has omitted or passed over with but a few words stories which many would consider among the most valuable portions of the children's *Story Bible*. Nor in her story-telling has she manifested the results of a careful study of geographical or historical settings.

Also from the point of view of present educational thought the book is faulty. In attempting to write the stories both "that mothers may read them to little children" and that "older children may read them" for themselves, she has not successfully adapted them to either class. The diction, sentence formation, and thought is frequently too advanced for the six-year-old; and, on the other hand, phrases are occasionally found which might offend a boy of twelve.

It is the author's expressed purpose to tell the stories in Scripture language whenever she deems it possible. This adds the charm of simplicity to her book; yet the wisdom of her policy may be questioned. The practice in literature-teaching in our best primary schools today is to dwell on a few stories, presenting them with a great deal of concrete detail, rather than telling or reading many stories with little but outline on which to feed the imagination. For the most part, the stories of this book are as much condensed as in the Bible narrative, and in not a few cases they are much briefer. This is especially true in the telling of New Testament stories, where even as many as nine separate stories are condensed into one chapter about eight pages in length.

A few of the chapter headings are such as to compel an interested

attention from the child, but, for the most part, they are stereotyped and commonplace. On the whole, we feel that in the field of children's literature Mrs. Sangster has not shown herself so competent a writer as in her long series of practical messages to women and girls.

SOPHIA LYON FAHS

NEW YORK CITY

Biblical Christianity. By HERMANN LÜDEMANN, D.D., Professor of Theology in the University of Bern. Translated by MAURICE A. CANNEY. London: A. Owen & Co., 1905. Pp. 82. 2s.

The translation of a German book into English is often a task of doubtful value, because the specific problems which the foreign theologian considers are often more or less strange to us. This volume, however, forcibly and clearly puts a question which must be frankly faced in America as well as in Germany or Switzerland. Dr. Lüdemann calls attention to the fact that ultra-conservative theologians and radical infidels agree today in the demand, "Either biblical Christianity or no Christianity." But the Bible is a "book of the ancient world," embodying a cosmology which the pupils in modern schools are taught to reject. The Copernican theory of astronomy makes inconceivable the relation between nature and the supernatural in which biblical thought is expressed. Dr. Lüdemann's solution of the problem consists in distinguishing between religion and theology. The biblical religion is a recognition of the supreme place of a righteousness inspired and guided by the consciousness of "the gospel of God's eternal love for the children of men as they struggle and develop." Both the critical study of theologian and the devotional study of the layman lead to the recognition of this as the real message of the Bible. To disengage this religious message from the antique and obsolete incidental elements in biblical theology is an imperative task today.

This little book, which can be read in an hour's time by any intelligent Christian, is an admirable introduction to a problem which must receive serious attention. To make the Bible the textbook of religious instruction, and at the same time to ignore the fact that boys and girls in the public schools are with universal approval taught a science in conflict with the biblical view of the world, is to make of our Sunday schools centers of spiritual confusion. We need many such honest books as this in order to realize the significance of certain facts which can no longer be evaded by our churches.

G. B. S.